

SPRING 2015

FLOURISH

*Your Seasonal
Garden Guide*

**Break Ground with
the Right Tools**

**Gardening Tips
for beginners**

**Garden-Inspired
Decor**

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Blue Salvia



Tulip Tree



Emerald Ash Borer

Native to Greater Fort Erie

Plant native plants whenever possible. They will reward you with vigour and hardiness as they are meant to grow in our area. The official Town of Fort Erie flower is the Blue Salvia. It is a true, vibrant blue and is drought resistant once established. It seeds for naturalization and will bloom all Summer long! There is minimum deadheading and the hummingbirds love it. Deer are not attracted to it either. There are several varieties to choose from.

The Town of Fort Erie tree is the Tulip Tree, (*Liriodendron tulipifera*). It has a fast growing habit to 70-90 feet high with large, showy

yellow tulip-shaped flowers and spectacular yellow leaves in the Fall. Plant a tree as a family, dedicate a tree in memory of a loved one. Trees give our town its beauty and fresh air. The Emerald Ash Borer will be changing the landscape in the coming years, so start to think now about what types of native trees you can plant to replace them. Some suggestions: Red Maple, Eastern Redbud, Flowering Dogwood, Eastern Hemlock, Eastern White Pine, to name a few.

- Provided by Ditch Greenhouse

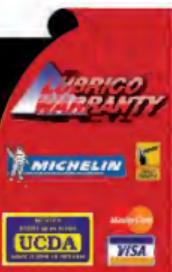
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10am

Gardening as Easy as 1.2.3, with Aileen Barclay

Top Ten Tips to make your Garden Grow



11am

Pot It Up with Frankie Flowers

Hands-on Planter Designs, with Frankie Flowers. Book signing to follow.



12³⁰pm

Bloom-Fort Erie-Bloom, with Raymond Carriere

Tips and advice from a National Communities-in-Bloom Spokesperson



1⁰⁰pm

Get Growing with Frankie Flowers

Low Fuss Lawn and Garden Tips from Frankie Flowers. Book signing to follow.



2³⁰pm

Ask an Arborist, with Denise Hart

Find answers to all your tree questions



3³⁰pm

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Improve your home and health with a vegetable garden

Planting a garden can add aesthetic appeal and functionality to a property. Vegetable gardens can transform landscapes while putting healthy and homegrown food on the table. By growing their own fruits and vegetables, homeowners have total control over what foods can be harvested, and they can ensure sustainable, safe practices are used to care for the plants.

Vegetable gardens can be compact or expansive, depending on how much space is available to cultivate. However, first-time gardeners may want to begin small so they can hone their skills and experiment to see which plants are most likely to thrive in their gardens. Expansion is always a possibility down the road.

CHOOSE A LOCATION

Spend some time examining your landscape. Vegetables generally need ample warmth and sunlight to thrive, so find an area of the yard that gets several hours of direct sunlight per day.

A sunny spot is good, but you also want a location with adequate drainage so your garden does not succumb to flooding or fungus during and after heavy downpours. Don't place the garden too close to rain gutters or near a pool, where splash-out may occur. Select a location that is isolated from pets so the plants are not trampled and cats and dogs do not relieve themselves nearby.

DECIDE WHAT TO PLANT

When deciding what to plant, consider what you eat and how much produce the household consumes, then choose vegetables that fit with

your diet. Some vegetables, like peppers, tomatoes, eggplant, and squash, produce throughout the season. Others, such as carrots and corn, produce one crop and then expire. Plan accordingly when you purchase plants or seeds, as you want enough food but not so much that it will go to waste.

Choose three to four different vegetables and plant them in the garden. Select varieties that require similar soil conditions, so that you can adjust the pH and mix of the soil accordingly. This will serve as good practice, particularly the first year of your garden. After you have mastered the basics, you can branch out into other produce.

KNOW WHEN TO PLANT

Many of the foods grown in vegetable gardens, including tomatoes and peppers, are summer vegetables, which means they reach peak ripeness after the height of the summer season. Pumpkins, brussel sprouts and peas are planted to be harvested later on. These plants may be put in the ground a little later than others.

It is less expensive to start seedlings indoors and then transplant them to a garden when the time comes. Seeds can be started three to four weeks before they would be put outdoors. Many vegetables are planted outside in April or May, but definitely after frost conditions have waned. Read seed packets to know exactly when to plant or consult with the nursery where you purchased established seedlings.

Vegetable gardens can become central components of outdoor home landscapes. Not only do gardens add aesthetic appeal, but also they produce fresh fruits and vegetables to enjoy throughout the season.



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Break ground with the right tools

The right tools for the job can be the difference between an interminable landscaping project and one that goes smoothly and efficiently. Aspiring landscapers probably have a few shovels and rakes hanging in their garages and sheds for basic landscaping work. But while such tools are effective for certain projects, when it comes to churning soil for garden beds or digging holes for outdoor structures, additional tools come in handy. It may be well worth a trip to a nearby local business to purchase or rent one of these tools ideal for breaking ground.

ROTOTILLER

A rototiller, sometimes called just a "tiller," is a powered garden tool designed to loosen soil prior to planting. A rototiller also can help aerate soil during the growing season. Because they reduce the need for manual spade digging or hoeing, tillers can be useful landscaping tools, particularly for homeowners who want to work efficiently.

Rototillers will break through tough soil and any plant roots. They come in a variety of sizes, and it's best to match the tool to the size of the job. Many homeowners can get by with smaller, less powerful models, especially if the tiller is only necessary at the beginning of planting season. Professional landscapers or those with large swatches of property may benefit from larger models.

AUGER

Augers, both mechanical and manual, are essentially large drill bits that help move materials from one location to another. Augers are typ-

ically used to cut holes in landscapes, and they are good for post-hole drilling, which is part of the process of installing deck footings, fencing posts or other structures. Augers come in a variety of sizes, and homeowners can choose how much power they prefer. Augers can be heavy and cumbersome, and many do-it-yourselfers will find that one-person augers are more than adequate for their projects.

Augers dig deep holes, so it is always smart to have the property surveyed prior to use. This way pipes, gas lines, buried electrical lines, and any other obstructions are clearly identified prior to drilling.

CULTIVATOR

Cultivators are similar to tillers in that they loosen soil. Cultivators are effective during the growth period of plants, when they can be used to aerate the soil and remove weeds. Cultivators come in hand-held versions and push models, and some are even motorized. Cultivators get close to plants to remove weeds without disturbing the plant. They also are used to stir in compost or fertilizer.

While many people think cultivators and tillers are the same, that is not the case. The former is less powerful and will mix the soil or stir up the top layer, while the latter can break up moderately hard ground and loosen firm soil.

When using any tools around the garden, wear the proper protection. This includes devices to protect hearing when power tools are in use as well as gloves and safety goggles. Tillers, augers and cultivators have the potential to toss soil and rocks into the air, so make sure others keep their distance while work is in progress.

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Landscape materials

Decorative? Naturally. But your home's landscape also matters for financial reasons, as well. The right landscape can increase a home's value by 15%. Most people think that "landscape" simply means plants. But consider the many other elements outside of your home: decks or patios, walkways, parking areas, fences, rockeries—all contribute to the way your home presents itself to the world. If any of these elements are chosen without proper care, they can create a variety of problems, from lessening your home's street appeal to releasing toxic chemicals, increasing the likelihood of flooding and polluting the greater environment. Fortunately, you can enhance how your property looks and functions with landscape materials that are safe for both you and the environment. You'll find ecologically superior products in a range of styles, to complement your home and personal tastes. This guide will help you identify the landscape materials that meet your personal mix of priorities.

SOIL

Soil is a crucial factor in how well your plants grow. If you decide to add soil to your garden, you should select soil that will complement the existing soil. To avoid damaging the existing soil structure, new soil should be laid over the top or mixed in to the existing soil profile.

When selecting soil, look for an even texture. Poorer soils may be full of clay clumps or stones. Smelling the soil will give you an indication of whether it contains stagnant water or undecomposed organic material or toxins.

ROCK

Rocks can be a great feature in the garden. They can make a garden look more natural, particularly with plants spilling over the top. Alternatively they can be used to create sharp edges and clearly define different parts of the garden.

The type of rocks available range from yellow sandstones, through grey volcanic rock, depending upon the area you live in. Rocks covered in moss or lichen can look as if they have been in the ground for many years, even if they have just been put into position. If you are using gravel for a garden wall, it will be important to select rocks with an attractive "face".

GRAVEL

Gravel has two major uses in the garden landscape. It can be used as a base for paving or as a feature in its own right.

The gravel used for supporting paving need not be aesthetically pleasing, but it should contain different particle sizes. This means that when the gravel is compacted to provide a support for the paving, it will provide a stable base.

Coloured gravel or pebbles can be used as either a spectacular feature or as a mulch in the garden. When creating a garden feature, select gravel or pebbles of the same or similar size. It can be either a uniform colour or a mixture of colours. You can control weeds by using a porous weedmat under the gravel.

SAND

There are many different types of sand that can be used in the garden. The types of sand available will vary according to where you live. There are different coloured sands and different particle sizes. Sands can come from quarries or be mined from sand dunes. Sand can be contaminated with salt, dirt, rocks and other unwanted materials. River sand or washed sand should be free of contaminants.

The sand you choose will depend upon the job you are doing. If you are using sand for a child's sandpit, it is important to make sure that it is clean. "Bricklayers sand" includes clay to help the mortar bind together. Coarse washed sand is suitable when you are using sand as a base for paving.

MULCHES

There are two basic types of mulch – inorganic and organic. Inorganic mulches include materials such as gravel and pebbles. Organic mulches are those made from plant materials and animal manures.

Wood chips are a widely-used mulch. They can be made from bark or from timber. They tend to break down slowly and come in a variety of sizes. The larger the particle size, the longer it will take to break down.

One of the problems with organic mulch is a process known as 'nitrogen drawdown'. If mulches have not been properly composted, they will decompose in your garden and rather than adding nutrients to the soil, they will take nitrogen from the soil as they break down. You should only use decomposed mulches or add fertiliser when your mulch is nitrogen-rich.

TIMBER

Timber is an important material for retaining walls, fences and other structures within the garden.

Pine is a softwood timber that is cheap and easy to work with, but it is prone to bowing and is not very durable unless it is treated. Treated pine is an excellent material that will resist termites.

Hardwood timbers are usually solid and durable. Both the original material and the time it has been dried determine the strength of hardwood timbers. A classification system is used to describe the strength and durability of different timbers. Ask your timber or garden supplier for details.

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YOUR *Seasonal*

JANUARY:

- Provide food and water for the birds.
- Browse seed catalogs and start planning this years garden.
- Prune dormant trees and vines.
- Be careful with salting walkways and driveways.
- Start cool season plants in greenhouse or warm southern window.

FEBRUARY:

- Provide food and water for the birds.
- Browse seed catalogs and start planning this years garden.
- Order from catalogs or pickup seeds from local garden shop.
- Start more cool season plants in greenhouse or warm southern window.

MARCH:

- Start warm season vegetable seeds for later transplanting (tomatoes and peppers).
- Plan for flower bed to provide summer color.
- Start summer flower seeds in flats.

APRIL:

- Provide nutrients to fruit trees at the fruit setting time.
- Dig and divide perennial flowers.
- Plant blueberries, strawberries and grapes.
- Mulch strawberries with pine straw as soon as they start blooming.
- Prune brambles to shoulder height and mulch.

MAY:

- Set out tender plants once all danger of frost is past.
- Keep seedbeds damp with shallow, frequent watering.
- Pinch the growing points from the stems tips of mum plants when they get 3-4 inches.
- Plant annuals among waning spring bulbs.
- Mulch to conserve moisture and control weeds.
- Control weeds while they are small.
- This is the big month for planting vegetables, however if planted too early, frost will kill your plants unless you are prepared to protect them on those cold nights.

- Stake tomatoes or provide cages to surround them.
- Keep weeds under control by hoeing or cultivating.
- Set out transplants of herbs.
- Trim forsythias after they have bloomed to keep the bushes shapely.

JUNE:

- Water more deeply and less often as plants become established.
- Check plants sales, for bargains and close outs.
- Pick your fruits and vegetables as they ripen.
- Keep weeds pulled and mulch in place.
- Watch for early disease problems and take care of the before they get worse.

JULY:

- Water early in the day so that the leaves will be dry by evening.
- Spend a few minutes every morning deadheading—pinching off spent flowers of plants.



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Garden GUIDE

- Keep your eyes open for insects, and disease problems. Early detection is important.
- Keep mulching to help retain moisture and reduce weeds.
- Divide Iris clumps for more plants.
- Cut, dry and store everlasting flowers for winter displays.

AUGUST:

- Stop feeding roses this month so that there won't be tender, new growth for winter kill.
- Keep picking or shearing faded flowers off annuals so they won't go to seed and stop blooming.
- Gather and save seeds of other annuals that you might want to use again. Don't bother saving seed from hybrids, they won't come true to type.
- Put seeds in envelopes and label them by name, date, and color. Store in a cool, dry place - such as airtight jars in the refrigerator.

SEPTEMBER:

- Take cutting of annuals and use as house plants.
- Plant hyacinth and daffodil bulbs in early to mid autumn.
- Gather leaves for composting. Mix green and dry materials and alternate with thin layers of soil or compost for more rapid decomposition.
- Keep deadheading flowers so plants won't look messy or waste energy making seeds.
- Dig, dry and store tender bulbs such as Gladiolus, Dahlias, and tuberous Begonias.

OCTOBER:

- Cover sensitive plants with blankets, sheets or protective cloths. Remove next morning.
- Keep gathering leaves. You can never have enough compost, mulch or organic matter in the soil.
- Plant late-season purchases of perennials or move and rearrange old ones to improve your planting plan. Group plants according to water needs as well as sun requirements.

- Harvest late season crops and store for winter consumption.
- Last chance to plant spring flowering bulbs.
- Harvest frost sweetened Brussels sprouts, carrots, parsnips, cabbage and kale.
- Clean up your perennials.
- Plant and move dormant trees.
- Stake newly planted trees for support.
- Rake leaves and mow the lawn for the last time this year.
- Protect young trees with wire netting.

NOVEMBER:

- Provide food and water for the birds.

DECEMBER:

- Send for seed catalogs.
- Take hardwood cutting of trees and shrubs.
- Clean and oil garden tools.



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Get kids excited about gardening

Many adults understand the joy of gardening, but gardening can be equally fun for children as well. While some adults may feel that certain children do not have the patience or perseverance to see plants grow from seeds to adulthood, selecting plants that are hardy and sprout quickly may be the key to igniting a love of gardening in children.

Choosing seeds that sprout quickly can hold the attention of children who are new to gardening. Many different plants fit this bill. Beans, peas, sunflower seeds, and bell pepper seeds are easy to start and germinate quickly. In addition, many leafy vegetables, such as chard, lettuce, spinach, and mustard, germinate in three to five days. Herbs, such as basil and parsley, also sprout fast. All of these plants are good options for introducing children to gardening, as each provides quick gratification.

To further interest children, it is a good idea to plant seeds in a way that allows youngsters to monitor the progress of growth. Use a transparent container, such as rinsed-out glass jars and canisters, to house the plant. Such containers give kids an unobstructed view of the process, during which children can plot the progress of seed germination and easily spot root and stem development. Once the seedlings grow larger, they can be transplanted into different containers.

Many seedlings can sprout with water alone. Children can easily grow new plants from clippings of a mature plant left resting in a shallow cup

of water, and seeds may not even need soil to germinate. Kids may have luck sprinkling seeds on a dampened, crumpled-up piece of paper towel. Cotton balls also make a good place to nestle seeds. Either material will hold on to water, keeping the seeds moist until they sprout. Afterward, the seedlings can be carefully moved into a soil-and-compost mix. The paper towel and the cotton balls will decompose and add to the organic matter already in the soil.

Edible plants often make good choices for children because kids can reap the rewards of their efforts. Herbs can be sprinkled onto food, or fruits and vegetables can be grown in containers and then served at mealtime. Kids can show pride in their accomplishments, especially if they have tangible results on the dinner plate.

Children who want to try something different can explore other types of plants. Aquatic plants, or those found at the pet store to grow in aquariums, can be easy to grow. They need little more than a container, fresh water and sunlight. Cacti and other succulents are also fun to explore. These plants are quite hardy in that they can stand up to moderate abuse, such as failure to water frequently enough. The unique appearance of cacti make them interesting focal points for an indoor garden.

A love of gardening that's fostered inside can also be explored outdoors. Set aside a plot of dirt where kids can sow their own seeds and tend to their own gardens. This hobby can help children learn patience and hard work while fostering an appreciation of nature.

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What can I plant in my shady backyard?

I want colourful flowers, not just green plants!

A: You have to really pay attention to your site. You may get more sun than you think! Is it dappled shade from older, established trees? Is it shade from a garage or house for part of the day. Do you get any direct sun at the site in late afternoon or early morning?

Iresine is a hot seller. It is beautiful and is similar to coleus, it does not have flowers per se, but it is really stunning. It grows tall. Another great one for shade is coleus with many varieties of leaf colour such as red, orange, chartreuse green. The Kong variety of coleus is amazing!

Okay, you asked for FLOWERS in the shade garden. We understand. Remember that really dark shade is an obstacle. Ferns for you. Think beneath a large stand of thick trees... that gets zero sun, never sun!

Here are a few suggestions that you may or may not have tried that will give colour in the shady backyard that gets some light.

- Begonia x hiemalis: Hiemalis begonia or Rieger begonia. This comes in a variety of flower colors including red, pink, yellow, and white. Flowers are large and showy.

- Begonia x semperflorens-cultorum. Wax begonia, or bedding begonia, or fibrous-rooted begonia. This comes in a wide range of flower colors with green or dark purple leaves

- Begonia x tuberhybrida. Tuberous begonia. These plants are generally quite large with showy flowers, but flowering of some varieties stops during the long days of summer.

- Browallia speciosa. Browallia. Usually has white or shades of blue or purple flowers. Does not do well during periods of cool weather.

- Caladium bicolor. Angel-wings. It is used for its colorful foliage. Leaves are often very large and do best in warm climates.

- Dichondra argentea. Dichondra. It is used for its foliage and performs best in partial shade as a groundcover, in a container

- Fuchsia x hybrida. Fuchsia. Some are best used in containers or hanging baskets, but upright varieties can do well in the landscape. Flowers can be solid or a bicolor red, purple, pink, or white, among others.

- Heliotropium arborescens. Heliotrope. Is best used in partial shade with moist, but not wet soils.

- Hypoestes phyllostachya. "Polka dot" plant. It is used for its colorful, mottled foliage with pink, red, or white. Plants can tolerate high light and can be trimmed in the garden if desired.

- Lobelia species. Lobelia or cardinal flower. Prefers partial, not full shade. Spreading varieties have blue, pink, or white flowers whereas upright varieties often have red or white flowers.

- Lobularia maritima. Alyssum or sweet alyssum. Prefers partial, not full shade but most varieties do not tolerate the heat of Summer.

- Pelargonium peltatum. Ivy geranium. Prefers partial, not full shade and is best used in containers or hanging baskets. All but a few recently introduced varieties do not tolerate high temperatures.

- Salvia farinacea. Mealycup sage. This plant prefers partial, not full shade and tolerates poor soils and some drought. Flower colors are available in blue, purple, lavender, and white.

- Torenia fournieri. Wishbone flower. Performs best in partial, not deep shade. Comes in a range of single and multi-colored flowers with shades of blue, purple, and yellow, among others.

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Transplanting trees no small task

An alluring landscape can make a home that much more enjoyable. Many homeowners devote considerable time to their lawns and gardens, and that devotion can pay both instant and long-term dividends. A well-groomed landscape can make it more enjoyable to relax in the yard, and such a property will be more attractive to prospective buyers when homeowners want to sell their homes.

But even the most well-designed landscapes sometimes need some rearranging, and those changes may involve transplanting trees. Homeowners may transplant trees for various reasons. Some homeowners might be moving to a new home and want to take a favorite tree along with them, while some trees simply outgrow their existing space and need to be moved elsewhere on the property. Regardless of why trees need to be transplanted, homeowners can take several steps to ensure the process goes as smoothly as possible.

- Determine why the tree needs to be moved. Some trees that are not thriving in their existing location may not benefit from a transplant. For example, a tree with a pest infestation might need to be replaced rather than transplanted. Determining the reason behind a transplant can save you the trouble of transplanting that won't benefit from the move. If a tree is not getting adequate sunlight in its present location, then transplanting it to a different location on your property with more exposure to sunlight might reinvigorate the tree. If soil is the problem, then transplanting the tree might prove ineffective unless you also test the soil where you plan to move the tree and adjust it so the tree can thrive.

- Prune the tree roots. Tiny roots that extend beyond the tree absorb water and nutrients, and such roots need to be pruned before transplanting a tree. Landscaping

professionals note that root pruning stimulates the growth of new small roots nearer to the tree's trunk, and these newer roots will be dug up when the time comes to transplant the tree. Root pruning must be done well in advance of transplanting the tree. For example, if you hope to transplant the tree in the fall, then do your root pruning in the spring before new buds appear on the tree. Speak with your landscaper or a nearby garden center to determine the best way to prune your tree's roots.

- Time your transplant correctly. Avoid transplanting trees when temperatures are colder and the ground is frozen. Transplanting before or after a thaw allows the transplanted roots time to develop. In addition, transplanting the day after you have watered the soil around the tree reduces the stress on the tree's roots, making it easier to keep the root ball intact.

- Protect the root ball. When transplanting a tree, make sure the root ball does not dry out. If it does, the tree likely won't thrive in its new location and all your hard work will have been for naught. Cover the root ball with damp burlap or canvas so it can retain more of the moisture it will need to adapt to its new location.

- Plant the tree sooner rather than later. While you can store a transplanted tree before you plant it elsewhere on your property, storing it for a long period of time increases the chances that the transplant will be unsuccessful. Ideally, you want to plant the tree in its new location as soon as possible.

- If you must store it, make sure you don't suffocate the root ball, as roots must be kept damp or they will die and potentially cost you the tree.

Transplanting a tree can add appeal to a property and help reinvigorate an unhealthy tree.



Garden-inspired decor brightens spaces and mood

Many homeowners take up gardening to transform their homes with beautiful flowers and foliage, while others do so to yield fresh fruits and vegetables. But gardening can be more than just a weekend hobby. In fact, it may be especially beneficial for homeowners to surround themselves with more plants and natural decor, whether in the yard or in the home.

Studies have indicated that gardening can be good for the mind and body. In addition to improving mood and reducing stress, plant life and gardening also may help people have a more hopeful outlook on life. If reaping the benefits of a beautiful landscape is not reason enough to get into gardening, elevating your mood and coping with depression or illness may be even further motivation to start developing your green thumb.

Home-design trends seem to be following suit, offering individuals more opportunities to surround themselves with potentially therapeutic plants. Explore these emerging and established garden décor trends to try in and around your home.

- **Living wall planters:** A living wall planter can add greenery to any décor without taking up floor or table space. Ideal for outdoor structures, these planters also can be used indoors if you safeguard against leaks and dripping. A living wall planter is a framed device that houses plants in a manner that enables them to be vertically mounted to a wall surface. While there are commercially available models, you can create your own design and paint or stain it to match the existing décor. Use a soil-free potting substrate to avoid the mess that regular soil may create.

- **Combining fish with gardening:** Enjoy the best of two relaxing worlds by installing a water feature in your yard. Garden retailers offer ready-made kits that can make fast work of establishing a pond or other water feature in the backyard. Otherwise, there are plenty of water garden companies and installers who can suggest a design and put in your desired water features. Add fish suitable for outdoor life to your pond. These include koi and certain goldfish varieties. Game fish are discouraged because they can destroy pond plants. If an outdoor



pond is more maintenance than you desire, consider an indoor aquarium with a combination of fish and live aquarium plants.

- **Creative furniture designs:** Maybe you're a person who appreciates the unique and whimsical? Tables, benches and chairs can be built with planting channels that enable you to have greenery and garden décor in one piece. Envision a picnic table with a cutout down the center for a thin row of plants or decorative grasses. This is a project the entire family can get behind, as the more creative ideas the better.

- **Improved outdoor lighting:** People who like to spend time in their gardens and yards may not want to be limited by sunrise and sunset. By incorporating different lighting sources, you can create a retreat that is welcoming at any hour. Although flood lights and overhead lights can illuminate a space, consider ambient and decorative lighting to create the desired ambience.

- **Functional fire pits and places:** A blazing fire creates a cozy spot to gather on chilly evenings, but fire pits and fireplaces also can be used as impromptu cooking spots for s'mores or frankfurters on a stick. You can purchase a stand-alone fire pit from any number of retailers or build your own with patio pavers and fire bricks to line the interior of the fire pit. Outdoor fireplaces require more work, and you want to hire a mason to ensure proper installation.

- **Enjoyable yard additions:** While plants and seating may take center stage, some people still want to have fun in their yards. There's an increased demand for yard designs and décor that can put

the fun in backyard living. Bocce courts, ring- or horseshoe-toss setups, as well as bean bag-toss boards, can be incorporated into landscape designs, giving you yet another reason to spend a few hours in the great outdoors, where you can experience a few healthy laughs in the process.

Gardening and spending time outdoors are great hobbies and may even boost your mood. Homeowners can explore the popular trends in garden décor and natural elements that they can enjoy inside and outside of their homes.

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Ideas for pool perimeter landscaping

With the rise of the "staycation," more and more homeowners are turning their backyards into their own private oases. The centerpiece of many such retreats is a refreshing and inviting pool.

Whether above-ground or inground models, pools make for welcoming spots to enjoy warm days and nights. A new pool can quickly turn a yard into the "it" spot to spend vacations or cool off at the end hot summer days. While pools are often the focal point of a backyard, many homeowners want their pools to blend seamlessly with the rest of their yards. When transforming a backyard that includes a pool, homeowners should consider a few factors to ensure each afternoon spent poolside is as safe as it is fun.

SAFETY FIRST

Although the goal may be to soften the lines of the pool and/or create sight barriers that will provide some measure of privacy for swimmers, homeowners must put safety above all else. Before any decorative touches are added, it is important to surround a pool with a slip-resistant surface and fencing (many communities require fences be erected around pools). Consult with a landscaping contractor, who should be knowledgeable about safety codes, or speak to the permitting department at town hall. There should be a list of requirements to ensure pool placement as well as any surrounding touches are legal and within code.

NONSLIP SURFACES

Concrete, brick and pavers and decking are popular materials used to surround a pool. Installers can make recommendations on materials and finishes, but one suggestion is to choose a rough finish. Pool water can make surfaces slippery. Concrete that is stamped or scarred provides extra traction than a smooth surface. The same can be said for brick patios and pavers. Avoid smooth stones or pavers with shiny surfaces, as these may only increase the risk of falls.

Homeowners who have chosen wood or composite decking to surround a pool should talk to their contractor about nonslip protective coatings. Such coatings typically are acrylic-based liquids applied like a paint or sealer. Some composite decks may be crafted with texture or

a built-in coating to reduce slipping. In addition, use nonstick mats on decks and patios to provide a little extra footing where people enter and exit the pool.

MULCH AND STONE

Homeowners often prefer some combination of mulch or stone to serve as a transition between the pool, concrete or paver hardscape and the lawn. Stone may be more practical for those with inground pools because it will not easily blow onto the water surface. With an above-ground pool, mulch or stone can do the trick, serving as a barrier so that pool water does not overly drench the surrounding lawn or damage grass after exposure to pool chemicals. Mulch and stone also will provide drainage from water runoff from the pool and rain.

Another advantage of having an additional barrier between the pool and lawn is that lawn clippings will not be shot into the pool when mowing. Stone and mulch can be dressed up with statues, lawn ornaments and tolerant plants.

FINISHING TOUCHES

Plants can provide the finishing touches for a poolside landscape. Homeowners should keep in mind that pools are not often shaded from the sun, so plants placed around the pool will need to be sun- and drought-tolerant. Succulents, such as aloe and jade, may work, as can the perennial shrub yucca. Moderately growing grasses will offer a privacy barrier.

Keep trees and flowering plants far enough away from the pool's edge so they do not contribute to debris that falls into the pool, which can complicate maintenance. Also, flowering plants may attract insects and other wildlife that may interfere with your enjoyment of the pool. It's better to create a friendly environment for wildlife further away from the pool.

Homeowners who need some advice planning the landscaping around their pools can rely on the expertise of landscape architects as well as employees at lawn and garden centers. Pool companies may work with landscapers and offer recommendations to people unaccustomed to working around pools.



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Going after grubs

Landscaping is a rewarding hobby for many homeowners. Men and women with green thumbs often take pride in their lush lawns and gardens, feeling a sense of accomplishment as their landscapes spend spring and summer returning to form and making yards more inviting spaces to spend relaxing summer nights.

But even the most well-maintained lawns are not immune to problems that can compromise all the hard work men and women put into their lawns. One such problem many homeowners encounter is a grub infestation. Grubs are a type of pest that can cause considerable damage to lawns, and while many homeowners have no doubt heard of grubs, they might want to learn more about these pesky pests so they know what to do should grubs ever appear in their yards.

WHAT ARE GRUBS?

Grubs are insects that live in the soil, where they feed on grass and roots. Many grubs are the larva of Japanese beetles, and those beetles typically lay their eggs in sun-drenched areas of lawns in midsummer.

WHAT ARE SIGNS OF GRUB DAMAGE?

Grubs not only damage lawns on their own, but they serve as food sources for local wildlife as well, attracting wildlife, which can do its own damage to lawns.

Lawns can turn brown for a variety of reasons, and grubs are just one of many potential culprits behind the browning of once-luscious landscapes. Grubs feed on roots, so homeowners who suspect their lawns have fallen victim to grub infestations can pull up the areas where grass has turned brown to see if there are any grubs, which look like worms.

Landscapes that have suddenly become popular among local wildlife that is digging up lawns may also be infested with grubs. Skunks and

raccoons feed on grubs, and may dig up lawns where grubs are present.

Damage resulting from grub infestation is most visible from late summer to early fall.

CAN GRUB DAMAGE BE PREVENTED?

Preventing grub infestation typically requires homeowners to keep watchful eyes on their lawns. Pay particular attention to areas that begin to brown, especially areas that are turning brown in spite of adequate watering. An early indicator of a grub infestation is small grubs around the roots of grass. In such instances, applying insecticide may be enough to prevent a small grub problem from spreading.

Insecticides also can be an effective preventative measure for homeowners looking to avoid grub infestations. Speak with a local landscaping professional for recommendations about which insecticide to apply and how best to apply it.

WHAT CAN I DO ABOUT GRUB DAMAGE?

Attempting to treat grubs in the spring may be ineffective, as grubs are large and no longer feeding in spring. So homeowners dealing with grub infestations should address the situation before they retire their green thumbs for the winter. Remove debris from grub infestations with a rake before watering the affected areas. Watering can help some damaged roots recover, but areas that have been especially damaged may need to be reseeded.

Grub infestations can be a nuisance to homeowners who put lots of time and effort into their lawns. But homeowners can take steps to treat such infestations and prevent them from returning the following summer.

DID YOU KNOW?

Neem oil is a naturally occurring pesticide that can be used to combat a host of landscaping pests and diseases. Azadirachtin is an active component in neem oil that can be extracted to repel and kill pests. Studies have shown that neem oil is nearly nontoxic to bees, birds, fish, and wildlife. In addition, neem oil has no link to cancer or other diseases, making it a safe insecticide when applied correctly. When consumed by insects, including grubs, insecticides made from neem oil can make those insects cease feeding or reduce their feeding, helping to prevent the spread of lawn problems associated with certain insect infestations. In addition, neem oil can hinder the maturation process of larvae by interfering with insect hormone systems, which can prevent them from breeding. As is the case when applying any pesticides, parents should be mindful of their children after applying neem oil. Though studies have not found children are more sensitive to neem oil than adults, parents may want to err on the side of caution and prevent their children from playing in areas of the yard where neem oil was recently applied.

Seeding and fertilizing schedule

Restoring lawns and gardens back to their pre-winter glory is high on many a homeowner's landscaping to-do list. In much of the country, the best times to tackle lawn projects are when temperatures are moderate, like in spring and fall. These seasons also mark the best time to seed and fertilize.

Planting and fertilizing new grass seed should be done when frost is no longer a concern and before frost arrives if you are planting in autumn. According to a landscape contractor and contributor sowing lawn seed should be done when the soil is warm, the daytime temperatures are moderate and you can keep the new seeds quite moist at all times.

While grass seed can be applied in the summer, it is more challenging to get the seeds to take root and thrive at this time, as water is more likely to evaporate under the hot sun. Also, many weeds germinate in the heat of summer. As a result, the weeds can infiltrate areas of the lawn where you planted, compromising the look of your lawn.

The process of reseeding and fertilizing your lawn is relatively similar if you decide to do so in late spring or early fall.

- Rake the parts of the lawn you plan to seed and remove any debris or rocks.
- Apply fertilizer to the cleared planting area. Use a rake or tiller to break up the soil and distribute the fertilizer to a depth of roughly two to four inches. Speak with a landscaper about which type of fertilizer you will need depending on where you live. Many fertilizers contain extra phosphorous to stimulate root growth in the lawn.
- Moisten the prepared area and let the soil settle. You want the soil damp but not so wet that it causes the newly applied fertilizer to run off.
- Begin to sow the grass seed according to the rate indicated on the seed bag for the type of grass you will be growing. Choose a grass seed that will thrive in your climate. Certain seeds are more tolerant of

drought and sunlight, while other species are better for shady areas or damper climates. Again, if you have any questions, consult with a lawn and garden center.

- Spread the seed with a broadcast spreader. Some lawn experts recommend spreading the seed in parallel rows and then repeating the process again in rows set at a right angle to the first series of rows for the best chances of seed coverage. The seeds then can be raked into the soil, covered with a little more soil and patted down.
- Water to keep the seeds damp. This may require watering twice or more per day until the seeds begin to germinate. Covering the seeds with about 1/4 inch of straw also can help keep the seeds moist, deter seed scavengers and prevent soil erosion. Remove the straw once the grass begins to grow.
- Roughly four weeks after the seeds have started to grow, apply another round of fertilizer to replenish the top layer of soil with nutrients that may have washed away from the constant watering.

Homeowners can employ a similar process to overseed a lawn in the hopes of producing a thicker, more attractive landscape. Any thatch and debris should be raked away, and the top layer of the lawn surface can be gently aerated. Top dress the lawn with a very thin layer of new soil and compost.

Broadcast the seed over the prepared lawn and lightly rake the new seeds to help them settle into the soil. Apply fertilizer and water the lawn frequently to keep the new seeds moist.

Once the seed has established itself, you can water the lawn for longer periods and less frequently to help develop strong roots. Wait for the lawn to reach a height of three to four inches before the first cut of the season.

Many homeowners like to take on the challenge of seeding and preparing their lawns. But some may find the task is best left to the professionals.

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Enter your property or nominate a neighbour today!

All entrants will be recognized with a 3, 4 or 5 Bloom Award and will be eligible for Top Criteria Awards. Winners will be announced at the Communities-in-Bloom Awards Gala, at the Leisureplex Banquet Hall. Gala date to be announced in April 2015.

STEP 1 - REGISTER IN ONE CATEGORY

- Single Residential
- Residential Neighbourhood
- Village Streetscaping
- Window Boxes or Planters
- Vegetable Gardening
- Blooming Beginners/
Young Adults
- Small Business
(1-10 employees)
- Commercial
(over 10 employees)
- Industrial
- Institutional
- Kids-in-Bloom (up to age 12)

STEP 2 - PREPARE for the JUDGES VISIT

Volunteer Judges will visit your property starting Monday June 29, 2015

*Further information will be mailed to you, after you submit this form.
You agree to allow judges unencumbered access to your property & acknowledge that photographs, registrant names & property addresses may be published for promotional purposes.*

Please keep your pets in a secured area during the Judges visit.

Step 3 - Attend the Awards Gala

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